GURU NANAK'S

JUPJI

(THE SIKH MORNING PRAYER)

Translation by
Khushwant Singh



DELHI SIKH GURDWARA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Guru Tegh Bahadur Niwas
SIS GANJ, CHANDNI CHOWK
DELHI — 110006
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The Sikh Religion

The Sikh religion as enunciated in the scriptures, is a wholesome mixture of Muslim doctrines and Hindu mystic philosophy. It inculcates belief in the unity of God and equates God with truth. The preamable to the morning prayer, Jupji, is recited as an introduction to a religious ceremonial and is known as the "Mool Mantra"—the basic belief.

Sikhs do not believe in sacred rivers or mountains nor worship the stone images. "To worship an image, to make a pilgrimage to a shrine, to remain in a desert and yet have the mind impure is all in vain. To be saved, worship only the Truth····" Guru Nanak.

Sikhism accepts the theory of "Karma" and life hereafter. It holds that there is rebirth after death and that the form of the recreated being is determined by his actions in life; that a person may escape the vicious circle of death and rebirth by righteous living and thus achieve salvation.

Sikh tradition elevates society to the status of the lawgiver and the Judge. The last Guru devised means by which the will of the society could be ascertained and enforced. A resolution (Mata) passed by the elected representatives of the congregation (Sangat) becomes a 'Gurmata' (order of the Guru).

The Sikhs do not have priests. Irrespective of status, all Sikhs are competent to perform a religious ceremonial. A class of professional scripture readers (Granthis) and musicians (Ragis) have come into existence, but they Function mainly in big cities where the sizes of the congregation renders some sort of institutionalism necessary.

The Sikh religion does not recognise the caste system. Guru Nanak chose a Muslim musician who would normally be beyond the pale of the caste system as a companion. His writings abound with passages describing as ungodly the conduct of those who condemn God's creatures (untouchability).

A feature of the Sikh religion which is particularly striking is its emphasis on prayer. The form of prayer is usually the repetition of the Name of God and in chanting hymns of praise.

Guru Nanak—the founder Master, was born in the year of 1469 A.D. He spread a message of love and universal brotherhood. He gave light and new life to the suffering humanity. Those who follow his teachings are known as Sikhs.

Explanatory Note

JUPJI—the morning prayer—is a composition of Guru Nanak and is the first chapter of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture. It was apparently not all written at one time and the length of its verses, their metre and thought content frequently varies. The verses are in the nature of meditations, dealing with the fundamentals of the Sikh faith, namely the conception of God, the place of the religious preceptor, the importance of prayer, a belief in the triumph of right over wrong, of transmigration, life hereafter and salvation. Unlike the rest of the Granth Sahib, it has not been set in music and is never sung. The language of Jupji is the Punjabi of the fifteenth century and is extremely difficult to translate. My translation is largely based on the commentaries of Bhai Vir Singh.

—KHUSHWANT SINGH

JUPJI—THE MORNING PRAYER

THERE is One God.
He is the supreme truth.
He, The Creator,
Is without fear and without hate.
He, The Omnipresent,
Pervades the universe.
He is not born
Nor does He die to be born again.
By His grace shalt thou worship Him.

Before time itself
There was truth.
When time began to run its course
He was the truth.
Even now, He is the truth
And
Evermore shall truth prevail.

(NANAK)

I

Not by thought alone
Can He be known,
Though one think
A hundred thousand times;
Not in solemn silence
Nor in deep meditation.
Though fasting yields an abundance of virtue
It cannot appease the hunger for truth.
No, by none of these,
Nor by a hundred thousands other devices,

***These lines, which are not in verse, are known as the *Mool Mantra*—the basic belief.**

Can God be reached.
How then shall the Truth be known ?
How the veil of false illusion torn ?
O Nanak, thus runneth the writ divine,
The righteous path—let it be thine.

II

By Him are all forms created,
By Him infused with life and blessed,
By Him are some to excellence elated,
Others born lowly and depressed.
By His writ some have pleasure, others pain;
By His grace some are saved,
Others doomed to die, re-live, and die again.
He will encompasseth all, there be none beside.
O Nanak, He who knows, hath no ego and no pride.

III

Who has the power to praise His might ?
Who has the measure of His bounty ?
Of His portents who has the sight ?
Who can value His virtue, His deeds, His charity ?
Who has the knowledge of His wisdom ?
Of His deep, impenetrable thought ?
How worship Him who creates life,
Then destroys,
And having destroyed doth re-create ?
How worship Him who appeareth far
Yet is ever present and proximate ?
There is no end to His description,
Though the speakers and their speeches be legion.
He the Giver ever giveth,
We who receive grow weary,

On His bounty humanity liveth
From primal age to posterity.

IV

God is the Master, God is truth,
His name spelleth love divine,
His creatures every cry : "O give, O give,"
He the bounteous doth never decline.
What then in offering shall we bring
That we may see His court above ?
What then shall we say in speech
That hearing may evoke His love ?
In the ambroisal hours of fragrant dawn
On truth and greatness ponder in meditation,
Though action determine how thou be born,
Through grace alone comes salvation.
O Nanak, this need we know alone,
That God and Truth are two in one.

V

He cannot be proved, for He is uncreated ;
He is without matter, self-existent.
They that serve shall honoured be,
O Nanak, the Lord is most excellent.
Praise the Lord, hear them that do Him praise,
In your hearts His name be graven,
Sorrows from your soul erase
And make your hearts a joyous haven.
The Guru's word has the sage's wisdom,
The Guru's word is full of learning,
For though it be the Guru's word
God Himself speaks therein.

Thus run the words of the Guru :
'God is the destroyer, preserver and creator,
God is the Goddess too.
Words to describe are hard to find,
I would venture if I knew."

This alone my teacher taught,
There is but one Lord of all creation.
Forget Him not.

VI

If it please the Lord
In holy waters would I bathe,
If it please Him not,
Worthless is that pilgrimage.
This is the law of all creation,
That nothing's gained save by action.
Thy mind wherein buried lie
Precious stones, jewels, gems,
Shall opened be if thou but try
And hearken to the Guru's word.
This the Guru my teacher taught,
There is but one Lord of all creation,
Forget Him not.

VII

Were life's span extended to the four ages
And ten times more,
Were one known over the nine continents
Ever in humanity's fore,
Were one to achieve greatness
With a name noised over the earth,
If one found not favour with the Lord
What would it all be worth ?

Among the worms be as vermin.
By sinners be accused of sin.
O Nanak, the Lord fills the vicious with virtue,
The virtuous maketh more true.
Knowest Thou of any other
Who in turn could the Lord thus favour ?

VIII

By hearing the word
Men achieve wisdom, saintliness, courage and contentment.
By hearing the word
Men learn of the earth, the power that supports it, and the firmament.
By hearing the word
Men learn of the upper and nether regions, of islands and continents.
By hearing the word
Men conquer the fear of death and the elements.

O Nanak, the word hath such magic for the worshippers,
Those that hear, death do not fear,
Their sorrows end and sins disappear.

IX

By hearing the word
Mortals are to godliness raised.
By hearing the word
The foul-mouthed are filled with pious praise.
By hearing the word
Are revealed the secrets of the body and of nature.
By hearing the word
Is acquired the wisdom of all the scriptures.

O Nanak, the word hath such magic for the worshippers,
Those that hear, death do not fear,
Their sorrows end and sins disappear.

X

By hearing the word
    One learns of truth, contentment, and is wise.
By hearing the word
    The need for pilgrimages does not arise.
By hearing the word
    The student achieves scholastic distinction.
By hearing the word
    The mind is easily led to meditation.

O Nanak, the word hath such magic for the worshippers,
    Those that hear, death do not fear,
    Their sorrows end and sins disappear.

XI

By hearing the word
    One sounds the depths of virtue's sea.
By hearing the word
    One acquires learning, holiness and royalty.
By hearing the word
    The blind see and their paths are visible.
By hearing the word
    The fathomless becomes fordable.

O Nanak, the word hath such magic for the worshippers,
    Those that hear, death do not fear,
    Their sorrows end and sins disappear.

XII

The believer's bliss one cannot describe,
He who endeavours regrets in the end,
There is no paper, pen nor any scribe
Who can the believer's state comprehend.

The name of the Lord is immaculate.
He who would know must have faith.

XIII

The believer hath wisdom and understanding ;
The believer hath knowledge of all the spheres ;
The believer shall not stumble in ignorance,
Nor of death have any fears.
The name of the Lord is immaculate,
He who would know must have faith.

XIV

The believer's way is of obstructions free ;
The believer is honoured in the presence sublime;
The believer's path is not lost in futility,
For faith hath taught him law divine.

The name of the Lord is immaculate,
He who would know must have faith.

XV

The believer reaches the gate of salvation;
His kith and kin he also saves.
The believer beckons the congregation,
Their souls are saved from transmigration.

The name of the Lord is immaculate,
He who would know must have faith.

XVI

Thus are chosen the leaders of men,
Thus honoured in God's estimation;
Though they grace the courts of kings,
Their minds are fixed in holy meditation.
Their words are weighed with reason,
They know that God's works are legion.

Law which like the fabled bull supports the earth
Is of compassion born;

Though it bind the world in harmony,
Its strands are thin and worn.
He who the truth would learn
Must know of the bull and the load it bore,
For there are worlds besides our own
And beyond them many more.
Who is it that bears these burdens ?
What power bears him that beareth them ?

Of creatures of diverse kinds and colours
The ever-flowing pen hath made record.
Can anyone write what it hath writ ?
Or say how great a task was it ?
How describe His beauty and His might ?
His bounty how estimate ?
How speak of Him who with one word
Did the whole universe create,
And made a thousand rivers flow therein ?
What might have I to praise Thy might ?
I have not power to give it praise.
Whatever be Thy wish, I say Amen.
Mayst Thou endure, O formless One.

XVII

There is no count of those who pray,
Nor of those who Thee adore;
There is no count of those who worship,
Nor of those who by penance set store.
There is no count of those who read the holy books aloud,
Nor of those who think of the world's sorrows and lament,
There is no count of sages immersed in thought and reason,
Nor of those who love humanity and are benevolent.
There is no count of warriors who match their strength with steel,
Nor of those who contemplate in peace and are silent.

What might have I to praise Thy might ?
I have not power to give it praise.
Whatever be Thy wish, I say Amen.
Mayst Thou endure, O formless One.

XVIII

There is no count of fools who will not see,
Nor of thieves who live by fraud,
There is no count of despots practising tyranny,
Nor of those whose hands are soiled with blood.
There is no count of those who sin and go free,
Nor of liars caught in the web of falsehood,
There is no count of the polluted who live on filth,
Nor of the evil-tongued weighed down with calumny.
Of such degradation, O Nanak, also think.

What might have I to praise Thy might ?
I have not power to give it praise.
Whatever be Thy wish, I say Amen.
Mayst Thou endure, O formless One.

XIX

Though there is no count of Thy names and habitations,
Nor of Thy regions uncomprehended,
Yet many there have been with reason perverted
Who to Thy knowledge have pretended.
Though by words alone we give Thee name and praise,
And by words reason, worship, and Thy virtue compute;
Though by words alone we write and speak
And by words our ties with Thee constitute;
The word does not its Creator bind,
What Thou ordainest we receive.
Thy creations magnify Thee,
Thy name in all places find.

What might have I to praise Thy might ?
I have not power to give it praise
Whatever be Thy wish, I say Amen.
Mayst Thou endure, O formless One.

XX

As hands or feet besmirched with slime,
Water washes white;
As garments dark with grime
Rinsed with soap are made light;
So when sin soils the soul
Prayer alone shall make it whole.

Words do not the saint or sinner make,
Action alone is written in the book of fate,
What we sow that alone we take;
O Nanak, be saved or for ever transmigrate.

XXI

Pilgrimage, austerity, mercy, almsgiving and charity
Bring merit, be it as little as the mustard seed;
But he who hears, believes and cherishes the word,
An inner pilgrimage and cleansing is his meed.

All virtue is Thine, for I have none,
Virtue follows a good act done.
Blessed Thou the Creator, the prayer, the primal
Truth and beauty and longing eternal.
What was the time, what day of the week,
What the month, what season of the year,
When Thou didst create the earthly sphere ?
The Pundit knows it not, nor is it writ in his Puran ;
The Qadi knows it not, though he read and copy the Koran.

The Yogi knows not the date nor the day of the week,
He knows not the month or even the season.

Only Thou who made it all can speak,
For knowledge is Thine alone.
How then shall I know Thee, how describe, praise and name ?
O Nanak, many there be who pretend to know, each bolder in his claim.
All I say is : "Great is the Lord, great His name;
What He ordains comes to be,"
O Nanak, he who sayeth more shall hereafter regre his stupidity.

XXII

Numerous worlds there be in regions beyond the skies and below,
But the research-weary scholars say, we do not know.
The Hindu and the Muslim books are full of theories; the answer is but one.
If it could be writ, it would have been, but the writer thereof be none.
O Nanak, say but this, the Lord is great, in His knowledge He is alone.

XXIII

Worshippers who praise the Lord know not His greatness,
As rivers and rivulets that flow into the sea know not its vatness.
Mighty kings with domains vaster than the ocean,
With wealth piled high in a mountainous heap,
Are less than the little ant
That the Lord's name in its heart doth keep.

XXIV

Infinite His goodness, and the ways of exaltation;
Infinite His creation and His benefaction;
Infinite the sights and sounds, infinite His great design,
Infinite its execution, infinite with out confine.

Many there be that cried in pain to seek the end of all ending.
Their cries were all in vain, for the end is past understanding.

It is the end of which no one knoweth,
The more one says the more it groweth,
The Lord is of great eminence, exalted is His name.
He who would know His height, must in stature be the same.
He alone can His own greatness measure.
O Nanak, what He gives we must treasure.

XXV

Of His bounty one cannot write too much,
He the great Giver desires not even a mustard seed ;
Even the mighty beg at His door, and others such
Whose numbers can never be conceived.
There be those who receive but are self-indulgent,
Others who get but have no gratitude.
There be the foolish whose bellies are never filled,
Others whom hunger's pain doth ever torment.
All this comes to pass as Thou hast willed.
Thy will alone breaks mortal bonds,
No one else hath influence.
The fool who argues otherwise
Shall be smitten into silence.
The Lord knows our needs, and gives,
Few there be that count this blessings,
He who is granted gratitude and power to praise,
O Nanak, is the King of Kings.

XXVI

His goodness cannot be priced or traded,
Nor His worshippers valued, nor their store ;
Priceless too are dealers in the market sacred
With love and peace evermore.
Perfect His law and administration,
Precise His weights and measures ;
Boundless His bounty and His omens,

Infinite mercy in His orders.
How priceless Thou art one cannot state,
Those who spoke are mute in adoration,
The readers of the scriptures expatiate,
Having read, are lost in learned conversation.
The great gods Brahma and Indra do Thee proclaim,
So do Kirshna and his maidens fair ;
Siva and the Saivites do the name ;
The Buddhas thou made, Thy name bear.
The demons and the demi-gods
Men brave men, seers and the sainted
Having discoursed and discussed
Have spoken and departed.
If Thou didst many more create
Not one could any more state,
For Thou art as great as is Thy pleasure,
O Nanak, Thou alone Knowest Thy measure.
He who claims to know blasphemeth
And is the worst among the stupidest.

XXVII

Where is the gate, where the mansion
From whence Thou watchest all creation,
Where sounds of musical melodies,
Of instruments playing, minstrels singing,
Are joined in divine harmony ?
There the breezes blow, the waters run and the fires burn,
There Dharmaraj, the king of death, sits in state;
There the recording angels Chitra and Gupta write
For Dharmaraj to read and adjudicate.
There are the gods Ishwara and Brahma
The goddess Devi of divine grace;
There Indra sits on his celestial throne

And lesser gods, each in his place.
There ascetics in deep meditation,
Holy men in contemplation,
The pure of heart, the continent,
Men of peace and contentment,
Doughty warriors never yielding,
Thy praises are ever singing.
From age to age, the pundit and the sage
Do Thee exalt in their study and their writing.
There maidens fair, heart bewitching,
Who inhabit the earth, the upper and the lower regions,
Thy praises chant in their singing.
By the gems that Thou didst create,
In the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage,
Is Thy name exalted.
By warriors strong and brave in strife,
By the sources four from whence came life,
Of egg or womb, of sweat or seed,
Is Thy name magnified.
The regions of the earth, the heavens and the universe
That Thou didst make and dost sustain,
Sing to Thee and praise Thy name.
Only those thou lovest and with whom thou art pleased
Can give Thee praise and in Thy love be steeped.
Others too there must be who Thee acclaim,
I have on memory of knowing them
Nor of knowledge, O Nanak, make a claim.

He alone is the master true, Lord of the word, ever the same,
He Who made creation is, shall be and shall ever remain;
He Who made things of diverse species, shapes and hues,
Beholds that His handiwork His greatness proves.
What He wills He ordains,
To Him no one can an order give,
For He, O Nanak, is the King of Kings,
As He wills so we must live.

XXVII

As a beggar goes a-begging
Bowl in one hand, staff in the other,
Rings in his ears, in ashes smothered,
So go thou forth in life.
With earrings made of contentment,
With modesty thy begging bowl,
Meditation the fabric of thy garment,
Knowledge of death thy cowl.
Let thy mind be chaste virginal clean,
Faith the staff on which to lean.*
Thou shalt then thy fancy humiliate
With mind subdued, the world subjugate.

Hail ! and to Thee salutation.
Thou art primal thou art pure,
Without beginning, without termination,
In single form, for ever endure.

XXIX

From the store-house of compassion
Seek knowledge for thy food.
Let thy heart-beat be the call of the conchshell
Blown in gratitude.

He is the Lord, His is the will, His the creation,
He is the master of destiny, of union and separation.
Hail ! and to thee be salutation.
Thou art primal, thou art pure,
Without beginning, without termination,
In single form, for ever endure.

*In the original, the author makes reference to the "Ayee panth", a religious order now defunct, but apparently held in great estimation in the lifetime of the Guru. Having failed to find anything which would throw light on this sect in any of the translations or commentaries, I have thought fit to make reference to it only in footnote.

XXX

Maya, mythical goddess in wedlock divine,
Bore three gods accepted by all,
The creator of the world, the one who preserves,
And the one who adjudges its fall.
But it is God alone whose will prevails,
Others but their obedience render.
He sees and directs, but is by them unseen,
That of all is the greatest wonder.

Hail ! and to Thee be salutation.
Thou art primal, Thou art pure,
Without beginning, without termination,
In single form, for ever endure.

XXXI

He hath His prayer-mat in every region,
In every realm His store.
To human beings He doth apportion
Their share for once and evermore.
The Maker having made doth His own creation view.
O Nanak, He made truth itself, for He Himself is true.

Hail ! and to Thee be salutation.
Thou art primal, Thou art pure,
Without beginning, without termination,
In single form, for ever endure.

XXXII

Were I given a hundred thousand tongues instead of one,
And the hundred thousand multiplied twenty-fold,
A hundred thousand times would I say, and any again,
The Lord of all the worlds is one.
That is the path that leads,
These the steps that mount,
Ascend thus to the Lord's mansion

And with Him be joined in unison.
The sound of the songs of heaven thrills
The like of us who crawl, but desire to fly.
O Nanak, His grace alone it is that fulfils,
The rest mere prattle, and a lie.

XXXIII

Ye have no power to speak or in silence listen,
To grant or give away,
Ye have no power to live or die.
Ye have no power to acquire wealth and dominion,
To compel the mind to thought or reason,
To escape the world and fly.
He who hath the pride of power, let him try and see.
O Nanak, before the Lord there is no low or high degree.

XXXIV

He Who made the night and day,
The days of the week and the seasons,
He Who made the breezes blow, the waters run.
The fires and the lower regions,
Made the earth—the temple of law.

He Who made creatures of diverse kinds
With a multitude of names,
Made this the law—
By thought and deed be judged forsooth,
For God is true and dispenseth truth.
There the elect His court adorn,
And God Himeslf their actions honours;
There are sorted deeds that were done and bore fruit
From those that to action could never ripen.
This, O Nanak, shall hereafter happen.

XXXV

In the realm of justice there is law;
In the realm of knowledge there is reason.
Wherefore are the breezes, the waters and fire,
Gods that preserve and destory, Krishnas and Shivas ?
Wherefore are created forms, colours, attire,
Gods that create, the many Brahmas ?
Here one strives to comprehend,
The golden mount of knowledge ascend,
And learn as did the sage Dhruva.
Wherefore are the thunders and lightning,
The moons and suns,
The world and its regions ?
Wherefore are the sages, seers, wise men,
Goddesses, false prophets, demons and demigods,
Wherefore are there jewels in the ocean ?
How many forms of life there be,
How many tongues,
How many kings of proud ancestry.
Of these things many strive to know,
Many the slaves of reason.
Many there are, O Nanak, their numbers are legion.

XXXVI

As in the realm of knowledge reason is triumphant
And yields a myriad joys,
So in the realm of bliss is beauty resplendent.
There are fashioned forms of great loveliness ;
Of them it is best to remain silent
Than hazard guesses and then repent.
There too are fashioned consciousness, understanding, mind and reason,
The genius of the sage and seer, the power of humans superhuman.

XXXVII

In the realm of action, effort is supreme,
Nothing else prevails.
There dwell doughty warriors brave and strong,
With hearts full of godliness,
And celestial maidens of great loveliness
Who sing their praise.
They cannot die nor be beguiled,
For God Himself in their hearts resides.
There too are congregations of holy men
Who rejoice, for the Lord in their midst presides.
In the realm of truth is the Formless One
Who, having created, watches His creation
And graces us with the blessed vision
There are the lands, the earths and the spheres
Of whose description there is no limit;
There by myriad forms are a myriad purposes fulfilled,
What He ordains is in them instilled.
What He beholds, thinks and contemplates,
O Nanak, is too hard to state.

XXXVIII

If thou must make a gold coin true
Let thy mint these rules pursue.
In the forge of continence
Let the goldsmith be a man of patience,
His tools be made of knowledge,
His anvil made of reason;
With the fear of God the bellows blow,
With prayer and austerity make the fire glow.
Pour the liquid in the mould of love,
Print the name of the Lord thereon,
And cool it in the holy waters.

For thus in the mint of truth the word is coined,
Thus those who are graced are to work enjoined.
O Nanak, by His blessing have joy everlasting.

SHLOK

(*Epilogue*)

Air, water aud earth,
Of these are we made.
Air like the Guru's word gives the breath of life
To the babe born to the great mother earth
Sired by the waters.
The day and night our nurses be
That watch us in our infancy.
In their laps we play.
The world is our playground.
Our acts right and wrong at Thy court shall come to judgment.
Some be seated uear Thy seat, some ever kept distant.
The toils have ended of those that have worshipped Thee,
O Nanak, their faces are lit with joyful radiance—many others
they set free.

1747